

Coywolves here?

With pups, predators are active

By Susanna Sheehan
Clipper Editor

Are there coywolves in Duxbury?

If you ask any Massachusetts state official concerned with wildlife, the answer will be no, but some Duxbury residents and the town's animal control officer aren't so sure that the animals, which are wolves crossed with coyotes, don't exist in town.

What they do know for certain is that the coyote population in Duxbury is active and growing and that residents should be careful this spring when they are outside with their dogs.

John Rest of Duck Hill Road recently sent photos of large coyote-looking animals to the Duxbury Clipper, wondering if they could be coywolves, which are much larger than regular coyotes. Coywolves, also known as Eastern coyotes, are thought to be a cross between the western coyote, eastern wolf, gray wolf and domestic dog. The hybrids, which are not new, are found throughout the Northeast United States. He said these animals have been seen on the salt marsh in his neighborhood and are very timid near people, but residents should be aware of their presence.

Duxbury Animal Control Officer Eddy Ramos knows that these animals exist in town but he also knows they don't. "The state denies there are coywolves, and without a DNA test, it's almost impossible to prove," said Ramos.

The animals thought to be coywolves can weigh up to 80 lbs, while an average coyote weighs between 40 to 60 lbs, said Ramos. Regardless of whether they are coywolves or coyotes, the predators are particularly active right now because they have babies and the females are hunting almost constantly to bring back food for their pups.

Ramos said the marsh areas are prime hunting grounds for coyotes. While the coyotes do try to avoid people, they may attack pet dogs. He knows of at least two recent attacks – one on a cocker spaniel – and said people should walk their dogs on a leash and be aware of their surroundings.

"People need to be extra careful this time of year," said Ramos. "The coyotes have babies and the females are starving all the time. When the babies are sleeping, they are out looking for food. They are opportunistic and will eat things like rodents, dead deer. For the most part, they are eating 24/7, anytime of day or night. Soon they will take the pups out to hunt. They're not nocturnal."

Ramos suggests residents take in their birdfeeders because they attract squirrels and the coyotes will go after them. He also recommends fencing the yard to protect dogs and walking with friends.

"Go on a walk with a friend with a couple of dogs," he said. "The coyotes not going to mess with that. There's always strength in numbers."



Is this animal a coywolf or a very large felt coyote? Regardless of the answer, residents are urged to be wary of them as they find food for their pups this spring.

Photo by John Rest